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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Eleventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday 24 November 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr ALSTON

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 4) (continued)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT

- ARGENTINA (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.18)

1. Mr. WIMER ZEMBRANO said with reference to the morning meeting, at which the Argentine delegation had continued to reply to the Committee's questions, that he was very sorry that Argentina had not submitted written replies to the questions put by the Committee concerning the issues listed in document E/C.12/1994/WP.10. The abundant figures provided in the oral replies were difficult to take in and were unverifiable into the bargain. Accordingly, although a rich one, the discussion between the Argentine delegation and the Committee had been confused. In the circumstances he proposed, firstly, that the Committee should request the Argentine Government to transmit to it a document prepared specifically for the Committee, containing concrete replies to the questions put and, secondly, that the Committee should decide, as a general rule, not to conduct a dialogue with representatives of a Government which had not first transmitted a document containing written replies to the Committee's questions.

2. Mr. ALVAREZ-VITA said that the Committee had already requested the Argentine Government to submit an additional written document about the implementation of article 11; however, that did not mean that when the Argentine delegation reappeared before the Committee at its next meeting it should not be asked to provide written replies to all the questions.

3. Mr. TEXIER said that, whatever the attitude of the Argentine Government and regardless of any subsequent submission of additional information, the Committee was already in a position to draw its conclusions about the implementation of the Covenant in Argentina on the basis of the report, the discussion with the delegation and the large volume of information provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

4. The CHAIRMAN said that, since it seemed to be the general wish, the Committee would request the Argentine delegation at the next meeting to communicate to it all necessary information in reply to the questions. Mr. Wimer Zembrano's second proposal, concerning the obligation of States to submit written replies to the questions contained in the list of issues on which the Committee requested additional information, would be considered at a future meeting.

- UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND (continued) (E/1986/4/Add.27, E/1986/4/Add.28, E/1990/7/Add.16 and E/1989/5/Add.9)

At the invitation of the Chairman, the United Kingdom delegation took seats at the Committee table.

5. The CHAIRMAN invited Mr. Fung to conclude his replies to the questions put two meetings earlier about the situation in Hong Kong.

6. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that, in view of the interest shown by the members of the Committee, the United Kingdom delegation had provided each of them with a file containing six documents in English, including the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. He wished to offer some clarification about the two legal texts under consideration by the Hong Kong Parliament: the one on equality of opportunity was a private bill, while the one on discrimination on the ground of sex was a Government bill. The private bill on the establishment of a human rights commission and equality of opportunity had not been approved by the Governor since it had financial implications. The Governor's right to decline to submit a private bill to Parliament was provided for in a text on the powers of the Governor and corresponded to an existing practice in the Westminster Parliament. A Government bill to combat discrimination against the disabled would shortly be submitted to the Hong Kong Parliament.

7. Mr. STEEL (United Kingdom), replying to the question concerning paragraph 19 of the list of issues (E/C.12/1994/WP.13), said that recent developments in budgetary policy had not had any negative impact on scientific research or cultural activities in the United Kingdom. Over the past six years the annual budget allocated to science had increased by 30% in real terms. Public funding for cultural activities was channelled mainly through the Arts Council; over the past 10 years allocations had increased by about 40% in real terms. The public financing of cultural activities was supplemented by funding by local communities and the private sector and by the profits from cultural events.

8. Replying to the question from Mr. Texier about the problem of the homeless, he said that according to the 1991 census there were 2,674,000 homeless people; part of that figure, but only a part, consisted of drug-addicts, alcoholics and mentally sick persons. Apart from the homeless as such, there was a number of people whom local communities had to rehouse; the figure had been 134,000 in 1993, i.e. 10% less than in 1992. The local authorities were endeavouring to solve the problem of persons living in poor accommodation or suffering other difficulties, in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. Homelessness had many causes, including unemployment and break-up of the cellular family. However, unemployment benefits allowed many unemployed people to continue to pay for their accommodation.

9. Many measures had been introduced to help the homeless. In England 180,000 public housing units had been made available in the past three years. There were also various local programmes such as the "Rough Sleepers Initiative" in central London.

10. Tenants could not be evicted without a court decision. In practice in eviction cases judges always had some room for manoeuvre as to date on which the eviction order took effect. Furthermore, the terms of eviction orders were governed by legislation such as the Protection from Eviction Act 1987 and the Housing Act 1988. Unlawful eviction or harassment of tenants were offences for which the law provided criminal and civil means of recourse.

11. As to whether the courts cited the provisions of the Covenant, which was not incorporated in domestic law, he said that traditionally British courts took into account in their decisions, sometimes through interpretation of the law, the international obligations entered into by the United Kingdom. The provisions of international conventions were also taken into account by the

legislature. Accordingly, even though the courts did not cite the Covenant / expressly, in practice they did respect its provisions.

12. One expert on the Committee had quoted figures on the housing situation: it was true that one home in 13 was regarded as technically unfit for occupation; that figure came from a study made by the Department of the Environment. One and a half million homes had been declared unfit for occupation in 1991; that figure was lower than the figure for 1986, which was 1.6 million. Funds for the repair and construction of housing came from various sources, to a large extent from the private sector.

13. Mr. PHIPPS (United Kingdom), replying to the questions about church schools, said that in England alone the State funded about 22,000 schools, including 4,500 church schools. The annual operating budget for all schools was about 12 billion pounds. The allocations for church schools were proportional to their number, i.e. about a fifth of the total budget. It was difficult to give precise figures for investment expenditure. Church schools seemed neither better nor worse treated than other schools.

14. Mr. GRISSA said that he would like to know the specific reasons why the Governor of Hong Kong had opposed the private bill on the establishment of a human rights commission and equality of opportunity.

15. Ms. BONOAN DANDAN, reverting to a subject which she had raised at a previous meeting, said that she was surprised that the Hong Kong Government supported the bill on discrimination based on sex - a bill which did not seem to give satisfaction to Hong Kong women - rather than the private bill on equality of opportunity whose scope was much broader.

16. Mr. SIMMA, reverting to the question of the training of judges, noted that they seemed to show hardly any interest in training in human rights. As far as he knew, the Judicial Studies Board had organized only one seminar for judges, in 1992. The seminars held from time to time by Hong Kong University seemed to be very poorly attended and, apparently, no judge had participated in the seminar on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights organized by the University.

17. That lack of interest in international human rights instruments seemed to manifest itself in court decisions as well. He cited two court decisions and noted that in the second, which was a decision of the Appeal Court of Hong Kong in June 1994, it was stated fairly clearly that since the treaty at issue in the case had not been incorporated in domestic law the Director of Immigration was not bound to act in conformity with its provisions.

18. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that it had not been exclusively for financial reasons that the Governor of Hong Kong had concluded that he should not proceed with the bill on the establishment of a human rights commission. The Government thought in fact that it was better to strengthen the existing machinery for protection of human rights and adopt measures which would meet the real concerns of society rather than to establish a commission whose existence might come to an end on 1 July 1997. That was why it had decided to support first of all the two bills on discrimination on the ground of sex and discrimination against the disabled. Furthermore, additional allocations would be made to the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education to enable it to

expand its activities in human rights education, and a teaching service would be created to help the Committee to perform its functions. The Government had also decided to offer the Director of Legal Aid the opportunity to create an independent body to monitor his organization's activities and those of the Duty Lawyer Service. The Legal Aid Service had been established by the Government to help poor people who needed legal assistance. The Duty Lawyer Service, which was funded by the public authorities, gave legal opinions and represented persons in all the Hong Kong courts competent to hear cases of criminal offences subject to a maximum term of imprisonment of three years. In addition, the judiciary was going to create five special courts to hear cases concerning the Declaration of Rights. The powers of the Commissioner for Administrative Complaints, who dealt with complaints against the administration and whose functions were similar to those of an ombudsman, had been expanded and proposals had been submitted for provision of easier access to the information in the Government's hands. Those were concrete measures which should continue to be applied beyond 1997.

19. Replying to Ms. Bonoan-Dandan's question about the bills on discrimination, he said that the Government was not opposed to the enactment of a law on equality of opportunity, but it was the Legislative Council which had the final say in the matter. The bill prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sex, which was supported by the Government, had been the subject of lengthy consultations and had led to the publication of a document in which the authorities sought the views of the general public. The Government regarded that text as useful and thought that the bill would be adopted. The same approach had been taken with respect to the bill on protection of the disabled. The authorities were trying to draft laws tailored as closely as possible to Hong Kong's very special situation.

20. Turning to Mr. Simma's questions about the training of judges in human rights, he said that many seminars had been offered for judges and lawyers in general. He did not know whether any judges had participated in the seminar held in October 1994 by Hong Kong University on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but he could confirm that senior officials had attended it, thus demonstrating the Government's interest in that kind of initiative. He acknowledged that judges did not take sufficient interest in the seminars on the question of human rights. He would seek further information on the matter and convey it to the Committee at a later stage.

21. Mr. SIMMA said that the Committee attached so much importance to the participation of judges in that kind of seminar firstly because the question of the teaching of human rights was of particular significance for the Committee's present session since it was going to devote its general debate to that topic, and secondly because it was essential to familiarize Hong Kong's judges with the obligations stemming from the international instruments on human rights, for the Basic Law provided no recourse in the event of violation of those rights.

22. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) assured the Committee that the Government attached great importance to education of the public in general and of the magistrature in particular in matters of human rights. In any event, he would communicate Mr. Simma's concerns to the competent authorities so that they could strengthen the training of judges in the international human rights standards, if necessary. However, it must be made clear that the attitude of judges towards international treaties was not due to their unfamiliarity with them but

to the fact that under common law the application of international treaties could not be argued in the domestic courts.

23. Replying to question No. 3 in the list of issues (E/C.12/1994/WP.13), he said that account had been taken of the concerns and opinions of the public and of NGOs in the preparation of the documents on Hong Kong which had been supplied to the United Kingdom for the drafting of its second periodic report. The Hong Kong authorities had always tried to work in close cooperation with NGOs and to take public opinion into account in the design of its policies. However, the preparation of the reports was a matter for the Government and not for NGOs.

24. With regard to the publicity given to the human rights instruments and the reports on their application, a grey paper concerning the second periodic report on the application of articles 10 to 15 of the Covenant in Hong Kong and a green paper containing the texts of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had been published in English and Chinese and could be obtained free of charge. Other human rights instruments, such as the ordinance enacting the legislation incorporating the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination had also been published. The public was also kept informed about human rights by means of radio and television programmes.

25. Mr. GRISSA said that there was not of course any question of entrusting the preparation of reports to NGOs; the point was that account must be taken of their concerns and opinions.

26. Ms. IDER asked how many copies of the green paper containing the text of the Covenant had been published and whether they had been distributed to the public at large or only to members of the civil service.

27. Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN said that she would like to know whether the draft reports concerning the application of the international instruments ratified by the United Kingdom were publicized in such a way as to allow people to give their views on them.

28. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that the public could obtain the grey paper free of charge from all the libraries which kept governmental publications and from all the district offices. It had also been distributed to the members of the Legislative Council and of the district and regional councils. He did not have any precise figures on the number of copies published, but he could give the Committee the information at a later stage.

29. Mr. TEXIER congratulated the Hong Kong Government on all the measures taken to disseminate the text of the Covenant and suggested that the Committee might now move on to the other questions relating to articles 10 to 12.

30. Mr. SIMMA said that he agreed that the efforts made by Hong Kong to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of the Covenant were praiseworthy.

31. The Chairman said that the Committee could rest satisfied about the dissemination of the Covenant in Hong Kong and he invited the representative of the United Kingdom to reply to the other questions which had been put to him.

32. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom), in amplification of his reply to the question on separated families, said that, as he had already pointed out, Hong Kong's immigration policy was clearly not deliberately designed to divide families but that, owing to the island's peculiar features, namely its small size and large population, it could not allow itself to apply an excessively liberal policy in the matter. The number of persons trying to enter Hong Kong illegally was in fact very high, and the authorities intercepted an average of 90 illegal immigrants a day who were immediately repatriated to China, whether they were men, women or children. To apply any other policy would be unfair to the people who waited patiently for their immigration applications to be considered by the competent authorities, and the Hong Kong Government thought that, considered from that point of view, its immigration policy was consistent with article 10 of the Covenant.

33. Ms. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that she had to revert to the case of Hai Ho Tak, the child expelled to China without his parents. She would like to have further information about his current situation.

34. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at a previous meeting the representative of Hong Kong had undertaken to communicate information to the Committee about that specific case as soon as he returned to Hong Kong.

35. Mr. SIMMA said that he could not accept that reply. It was in fact difficult to understand why, in a case which had been so widely reported as that of Hai Ho Tak, the Hong Kong delegation was unable to give any further information. In the light of the legal decision handed down in the case, the application of article 10 of the Covenant in Hong Kong had, in his view, serious imperfections. It seemed that under the present system an appeal could be made to the Immigration Tribunal against a decision of the Immigration Office. However, the Tribunal was apparently not competent to review a decision on the substance, by virtue of which a person applying to remain in Hong Kong for humanitarian reasons had been denied permission. In the case of Hai Ho Tak the judge had commented that to require the person whose function was to prevent illegal immigrants from entering the country to take decisions allowing them to stay in exceptional cases did not offer the best means of ensuring balance between the interest of individuals and the interest of the State. The judge had been of the view that the problem could be solved by amending the Immigration Ordinance so as to allow a person subject to an expulsion order to appeal against the decision. He would like to know whether the Hong Kong Government was aware of those comments and whether it intended to take any corresponding action.

36. Mr. CEAUSU asked whether, after July 1997, any changes improving the situation for individuals would be made in the policies and practices of family unification.

37. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the concerns expressed by the Committee about the fate of the boy Hai Ho Tak, the Hong Kong delegation should send it more specific information on the case by telefax during the following week.

38. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that the Hong Kong Government had nothing to hide in connection with the Hai Ho Tak case. The Hong Kong delegation did not have specific information about the case simply because it was not a unique

one. Nevertheless, he would undertake to provide more detailed information to the Committee during the following week. In any event, the Hong Kong Government would take into account the concerns expressed by the Committee and the comments of the judge who had heard the case.

39. It was hardly likely that the immigration arrangements would undergo any major changes after 1997. In fact, the geographical factors underlying the policy would not change and the control of migration into Hong Kong would continue to operate along the lines of the current system. The only noteworthy difference would concern children born outside Hong Kong having one parent permanently resident in Hong Kong at the time of birth. The criteria for such cases contained in the current legislation were different from the ones contained in the Basic Law which would come into effect in 1997.

40. Mr. GRISSA said that he was surprised that a State should impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of its own citizens, as was apparently going to be the case from 1997. If his understanding was correct, a journey from Peking to Shanghai would not be treated in the same way as a journey from Peking to Hong Kong.

41. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that Mr. Grissa's understanding was correct.

42. Mr. SIMMA noted that the written replies on Hong Kong stated that responsibility for authorizing immigrants to make their way to Hong Kong rested with the Chinese Government. In his opinion, the obligations of article 10 of the Covenant concerned primarily the United Kingdom Government and the Hong Kong authorities. Such obligations could have international consequences when a State bound by the Covenant entered into negotiations with other States which were not. The Covenant must be no less respected in such negotiations. He would therefore like to know whether a system had been established to ensure that China's procedures for authorizing persons to go to Hong Kong were in conformity with article 10 and whether an agreement had been concluded between China and the United Kingdom on the criteria to be applied. He would also like to know whether the obligation under the Covenant to ensure the unity and well-being of the family would be fulfilled in such cases.

43. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that he was not competent to speak on behalf of the Chinese Government. It must not be forgotten that Hong Kong would be part of China but that two different systems would be applied on the mainland and in Hong Kong. He believed that he could confirm that no major change would be made in the regulations concerning the movement of individuals but he obviously did not know the details of the policy which the Chinese authorities would apply.

44. Mr. STEEL (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom could not be bound by obligations under the Covenant with respect to what the Government of the People's Republic of China might or might not do in its own territory. The People's Republic of China was a sovereign State and free to introduce whatever arrangements it wished with regard to migration. All that the British Government could do was to accept or reject persons coming from China in accordance with its obligations under the Covenant.

45. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom), taking up the question of child suicide (paragraph 27 of the list of issues), said that in order to prevent any increase in the number of suicides among young people the Department of Education had introduced measures, including video programmes and television and radio messages, designed to emphasize the value of human life and the importance of communication between parents and children. Seminars and workshops had been held to train teachers to deal with the problem. Doctors had also been invited to give talks on mental health and stress management in secondary schools. In addition, funds had been made available for the study of the phenomenon, and several bodies had been created for that purpose. A decision had also been taken to strengthen the effectiveness of the proposed services by means of telephone hotlines open to young people 24 hours a day, to modernize the equipment of youth centres, and to develop networks for providing assistance to young people.

46. With regard to child abuse, the Hong Kong Government had reconvened in 1993 the multidisciplinary Working Group on Child Abuse, which monitored the implementation of the recommendations adopted and proposed new ones. In that context a subcommittee regularly organized education programmes to raise public awareness of the need to prevent child abuse. In addition, the guidelines and procedures for handling cases of child abuse had been reviewed, and the Child Protection Registry operated by the Social Welfare Department had been computerized; that would facilitate timely intervention when necessary. The Protection of Women and Juveniles Ordinance and the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance had also been reviewed in order to extend the protection of children and juveniles who were suspected victims of physical, psychological and emotional abuse.

47. Drug abuse by adolescents had increased in the past five years, but the proportion of young drug abusers in the population remained low.

48. In the first half of 1994 a little over 20% of drug abusers were aged under 21. Most of them were males, with an average age of 17 years. Heroin was the principle drug taken by young drug abusers, followed by cannabis and cough medicines. According to some reports, young drug abusers had an average of 8.3 years of schooling.

49. According to a recent survey, young drug abusers took drugs for three main reasons: "to forget about trouble", "to get high", and "to relax". Many of them were not aware of the risks which they were running: 13% of heroin-addicts thought that heroin was not dangerous, and 60% of young drug abusers believed that they would be able to kick the habit.

50. The Government had adopted a global and multidimensional strategy to combat drug abuse which had three components: reduction of demand, reduction of supply, and treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. In order to reduce the demand the Government was emphasizing prevention and information. The main agents in the strategy were the Department of Education, the Narcotics Division, the Action Committee Against Narcotics, and the Department of Health. Young people were informed about the dangers of drugs both at school, by teachers and outside agents, and in the districts where they lived, by social workers. Seminars had also been held for parents, with the support of parent-teacher associations. Messages were also broadcast on radio and television. The Working Group on Services for Youth at Risk, chaired by the Director of Social

Welfare, was currently studying the question of drug abuse from the social standpoint and would make recommendations for stepping up the fight against drug abuse to all the organs and services concerned, with the emphasis on information and the training of caseworkers and parents.

51. Very stringent legislation had been enacted in order to reduce the supply, including the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, which strictly regulated the import of certain substances such as codeine, and the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, which provided heavy penalties for the illegal import of certain substances. The police, the customs authorities and the Department of Health, which worked very closely together, were enforcing the legislation very strictly. Persons wishing to give information about drug trafficking could now use a telephone hotline.

52. The Department of Health had established several programmes for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts, including the voluntary out-patient methadone programme. Other bodies, such as the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers and the Hong Kong Christian Service, were also helping drug addicts who sought help. Lastly, the Government was planning to establish a pilot centre for the treatment of young drug abusers.

53. Turning to the question of domestic violence against women (para. 28 of the list of issues), he said that 40 cases of domestic violence against males and 202 cases against females had been recorded in 1993. In order to combat what was a very serious problem, the police had created a specialist working group which had drafted an information pamphlet advising police officers of their role and powers with respect to protection of victims, prevention of further incidents, and conduct of inquiries.

54. A number of public bodies and NGOs were also tackling the problem. The Social Welfare Department had established 54 family service centres which offered assistance to victims of domestic violence: advice, financial relief, childcare services, and rehousing. The caseworkers in the centres could refer victims to psychologists. The Government was shortly to increase the number of centres, caseworkers and psychologists.

55. Eighty temporary accommodation places had been provided for battered wives and their children, who could also contact the Social Welfare Department and various NGOs by means of a hotline. Victims could take legal action under the Domestic Violence Ordinance and receive legal aid and advice about divorce proceedings and child custody.

56. There were various prevention programmes to help women manage their family relationships better and prevent violence. The number of caseworkers attached to such programmes, including the Family Life Education Programme, was to be increased.

57. Replying to the question in paragraph 29 of the list of issues, concerning the income of the poorest segments of the population, he said that the 1991 population census had divided all households into five classes, each representing 20% of the total. From 1981 to 1991 the average monthly income (in Hong Kong dollars) increased from 1,026 to 3,460 dollars for the first class, from 2,375 to 6,659 for the second, from 2,955 to 9,964 for the third, from 4,261 to 14,989 for the fourth, and from 7,551 to 27,963 for the fifth. The

inflation rate for the decade had been 116%. The average purchasing power of all the classes had thus increased considerably during the period. It should be added that the range of incomes was not as broad as the figures cited might seem to indicate, since the various taxes and social benefits had not been taken into account.

58. Persons without any income received State aid through the social security system. In 1994 the average amount of social security payments had been 2,440 Hong Kong dollars for a single-person household, 3,840 for two persons, 5,280 for three, 6,880 for four, 8,400 for five, 9,850 for six, 11,380 for seven, and 14,500 for a household of eight persons or more. There were also housing benefits, child care allowances, and study scholarships.

59. Mr. GRISSA asked what such benefits amounted to in terms of purchasing power.

60. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that over the past 20 years the benefits had increased by a factor of 15 in nominal value, while the price index for the same period had increased by a factor of six.

61. Ms. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked whether the allowances paid to the elderly were higher than those for other poor persons.

62. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that the elderly received the same social security benefits as other poor people and that their benefits likewise varied according to the number of persons in the household.

63. Mr. TEXIER asked whether any people suffered from malnutrition.

64. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that thanks to its prosperity the Territory of Hong Kong did not have that problem. However, the increasing number of obese adolescents was a source of concern. Having answered the question on paragraph 30, concerning malnutrition, he turned to paragraph 31, which dealt with living conditions in temporary housing areas. The authorities had undertaken the implementation of a three-year programme to rehouse about 16,200 people who were currently living in temporary housing areas. In the meantime, the relevant municipal services attended to the cleansing and maintenance of such housing on a daily basis.

65. Mr. GRISSA said that he would like to know where the persons living in the temporary housing areas came from and what was the situation of the "cage people" whose very precarious living conditions had been illustrated with slides by NGOs on the previous Monday.

66. Mr. FUNG (United Kingdom) said that the temporary areas housed squatters and persons whose homes had been destroyed by fire.

67. The persons loosely referred to as "cage people", whom the authorities referred to as "bedspace apartment lodgers", did in fact have room only for a bed in the apartments where they lodged. The 145 such apartments housed 3,200 people, not 10,000 as certain NGOs had said. The average monthly rent for such an apartment was 400 Hong Kong dollars, not 800. The apartments were indeed overcrowded and violated the safety standards. For that reason, a bill designed to bring them up to standard had been tabled in June 1993. In

addition, the Social Welfare Department was working actively to rehouse such people. Six hundred of them had already been rehoused and a further 1,600 would be moved shortly. People who had not yet been rehoused could seek admission to hotels managed by the administration.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.